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DE RUEHNO #0254/01 1631454  
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FM USMISSION USNATO  
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RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 000254

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/10/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [EUN](#) [BK](#) [KV](#)  
SUBJECT: NATO-KOSOVO: EUSR FEITH STRESSES NEED FOR U.S. AND  
NATO PRESENCE IN KOSOVO

Classified By: Ambassador Ivo Daalder, Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: EU Special Representative Feith told NATO Permanent Representatives on June 9 that, while he thought conditions were appropriate for a KFOR drawdown, a continued U.S. and NATO presence in Kosovo and the region would remain critical. He advised that KFOR should retain the ability to serve as third responder, particularly for upcoming local elections, and preserve its current capability in northern Kosovo. Allies supported his call for a proactive public diplomacy campaign in support of KFOR's move to deterrent presence. END SUMMARY

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U.S. and NATO Presence in Kosovo Indispensable  
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12. (C) EU Special Representative (EUSR) Feith and EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) Head de Kermabon on June 9 discussed the Kosovo political situation with NATO Permanent Representatives in light of KFOR's impending move to deterrent presence. EUSR Feith emphasized that, while he thought conditions were appropriate for a KFOR drawdown to deterrent presence, a continued U.S. and NATO presence in Kosovo and the region would be critical for years to come. Feith warned against replacing KFOR with an EU military force, saying that what counts in Kosovo and the region is U.S. engagement and military presence.

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Security Situation Allows Cautious KFOR Reconfiguration  
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13. (C) Feith counseled NATO to consider the security situation and wider prospects for a stable, multi-ethnic society in Kosovo when making decisions about the reconfiguration of KFOR. Feith and de Kermabon assessed the security situation in Kosovo as calm but fragile. Pristina

was making good progress in standing up security institutions that increasingly can provide public security.

¶4. (C) Feith cautioned, however, that Kosovo security institutions could be overtaxed by specific incidents. As such, KFOR should retain the ability to act as third responder behind Kosovo Police and EULEX, particularly in northern Kosovo. De Kermabon added that KFOR should retain this capacity not just in the north but also in other hot spots.

¶5. (C) In response to a query from Romania, Feith said he believed that the Kosovo Police were ready to assume responsibility from KFOR for protected religious and cultural sites. However, he warned that the Serbian Orthodox Church may resist KFOR's departure from these sites. De Kermabon added that while the Kosovo Police were technically ready, he questioned Pristina's will to take this step, as well as Kosovo Serb readiness to accept it.

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KFOR Must Retain Ability to Respond in North  
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¶6. (C) Feith assessed that KFOR downsizing could proceed safely in most of Kosovo, but NATO should maintain KFOR's current capability in northern Kosovo until the situation there stabilizes. Stabilizing the north would take concerted international efforts to help EULEX operate there, eliminate parallel institutions, and promote two-way returns across the

Ibar river.

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Serbia Remains a Nuisance  
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¶7. (C) Feith said that Serbia no longer constituted a military threat to Kosovo. Belgrade was, however, a political nuisance. Belgrade's level of cooperation with EULEX remained unacceptable.

¶8. (C) France said dialogue with Serbia was critical to promote cooperation. Greece objected to Feith's characterization of Serbia as a nuisance and said much depends on establishing cooperative ties between Belgrade and Pristina.

¶9. (C) Feith said NATO and the EU should be more forceful in exercising leverage with Belgrade. He called on NATO to push Belgrade to cooperate in the north and said we had an opportunity to work against parallel institutions because the financial crisis was undercutting Belgrade's ability to fund them.

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KFOR Should Go Slow before Elections  
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¶10. (C) Feith said NATO should take into account local elections in Kosovo, which would be key to integrating Kosovo Serbs into the political process and institutions. He expected elections to take place in November, arguing that KFOR's ability to assist local authorities and EULEX should not be reduced before this. France, supported by Greece, said encouraging Kosovo authorities to pursue outreach to Kosovo Serbs was critical to stability.

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KFOR Drawdown Could Send Positive Signal to Region  
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¶11. (C) The Dutch PermRep expressed concern about the implications for Bosnia of KFOR's move to deterrent presence. Feith said he thought the political effects for Bosnia and the wider region would be positive. He said that a KFOR drawdown would be a signal of Transatlantic confidence in the region and an encouragement to local leaders to take positive

ownership.

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NATO Must Shape the Message  
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¶12. (C) EUSR Feith said Prime Minister Thaci supported a KFOR drawdown but wanted to convey the need for appropriate messages of continued Alliance engagement and support. Feith added that KFOR reconfiguration should be preceded by a coherent public information campaign. He said that NATO needed to reassure the public that KFOR was not abandoning Kosovo while also signaling to potential mischief makers that their margin of maneuver continues to shrink.

¶13. (C) Italy and Germany stressed that the Alliance's message on deterrent presence was critical. NATO should make clear that KFOR was not leaving Kosovo; we are simply changing our force posture to reflect the changing situation on the ground in Kosovo. Denmark indicated that strategic communications should be a joint effort that includes the EU

and broader international presences in Kosovo.

¶14. (C) In response to a query from Norway on the immediate effect once Defense Ministers announce the KFOR drawdown, Feith stated that what would be needed was immediate distribution of a reassuring message. NATO would not rapidly downsize; the drawdown would be staggered and deliberate.

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NATO-EU Cooperation Key as KFOR Downsizes  
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¶15. (C) De Kermabon said he believed EULEX had established its credibility in the north, a development he attributed to fruitful work with KFOR. He expressed satisfaction with the permanent cooperation between KFOR and EULEX. Turkey endorsed his comments and said it was prepared to increase substantially its contribution to EULEX.

¶16. (C) As KFOR downsizes, Feith said that a good communications strategy and continued engagement between KFOR, EULEX, and his office would be important. The Secretary General concluded the meeting with a call to continue the excellent NATO-EU cooperation in Kosovo.  
DAALDER